Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 14 Number 11 December 2017

**FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 17th December 2017: Manjeera WLS. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.00AM.**

The Manjeera WLS, located in Medak District, is a freshwater ecosystem with a riverine habitat that supports mugger crocodiles. It is also a good birding site. This would be a half-day trip. Carry water and breakfast. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532). We will be car-pooling, so please let Surekha know if you need a ride, and also if you can accommodate any others in your vehicle. Non-BSAP members are most welcome; however, a voluntary contribution to the Society of Rs.100.00 each will be appreciated.

## RENDEZVOUS WITH THE AMUR FALCONS
## Doyang Reservoir & Pangti Village, Nagaland, October 2017

Yella Prakash Rao

**Amur Falcons**

This visit had been on my mind ever since I watched the video titled 'The Race to Save the Amur Falcon' by Conservation India. A recent news paper report confirming the arrival of Amur Falcons at Doyang Reservoir on October 13, 2017 was the trigger point and had me working out the finer details for this important event.

We set out from Dimapur post lunch on October 28, 2017 and drove through Kohima and Wokha to reach Pangti village located on the edge of the Doyang Reservoir. We retired for the night at the residence of Mr Mhonjan, one of the homestays earmarked for visitors. A boatman-cum-guide Mr Lipithung met us at 3.30AM on the D-Day to drive us to the roosting point. On reaching the roosting site at around 4.30AM, we saw silhouettes of the falcons milling around the trees. As the sun got brighter, it was truly enchanting to see thousands of Amur Falcons taking to the skies and flying all around us. We spent the next four hours or so admiring this spectacle and enjoying their presence all around us.

The birds were first sighted in 2001 and, thereafter, kept growing in numbers, probably attracted by the abundant food reserves created as the dam filled up towards completion of the project in 2010. Owing to lack of awareness of conservation of wild life, the villagers, who are hunters by tradition, began to hunt the birds as a delicacy. By 2006, this had gone commercial and these birds were trapped in large numbers and traded in nearby towns. As news of this massacre spread to rest of India and the world, urgent measures were put in place to preserve these birds and the efforts of all agencies involved bore fruit.

I was glad to see the same hunters become protectors of these migrants. A local body called the Amur Falcon Roosting Area Union (AFRAU) was formed to protect these birds every season. This is by far one of the greatest success stories in conservation of wild life in India!

In 2013 a scientific team satellite tagged three birds and named them Pangti, Wokha and Naga to collect data to understand these birds and their journey to Southern Africa. The bird named Pangti returned the following year to roost again at the Duyong Reservoir. A total of 8 birds have been tagged so far of which one female falcon named Longleng is still active. This bird, after having roosted in Manipur, set out on November 13, 2017 and reached Somalia on November 17, 2017, covering almost 5000km in 5 days. As on December 4, 2017 it was found in Central Tanzania. A complete trip profile and migration routes taken by these birds can be found on www.satellitetracking.eu

As per the reports of the President of the Amur Falcon Roosting Area Union, Mr N Thungbemo Shitri, the birds have been seen roosting at Longleng, Hakhizhe and Phom areas in Nagaland in addition to Duyong Reservoir. They have been found in large numbers in Manipur and Meghalaya too. The last batch left Duyong reservoir on November 26, 2017.

**Amur Falcon**

* * *

## TANZANIA: NGORONGORO CONSERVATION AREA

Text & Photos: Barnali Chaudhuri

Our group of 29 members, including 3 from USA, reached Kilimanjaro on October 10, 2017 via Ethiopian Airlines from Mumbai. Having changed dollars to the Tanzanian Shilling, we boarded our bus and drove to Meserani Snake Park beside Maasai Cultural Museum at Arusha. The Maasai are a Nilo-Hamatic ethnic group. The Museum guide told us about the Shuka, a colourful blanket-like garment, where red represents blood and blue represents the sky. Maasai women wear large flat-beaded necklaces and very long elaborate ear ornaments.

We learned that in the Maasai culture, both boys and girls go through circumcision to mark the transition from childhood to adulthood. There is also a practice of drawing cow blood from the neck while the cow is alive; the Maasai believe that drinking of cow blood makes the body stronger and warmer.

We passed several Maasai villages *en route* to Serengeti during the later part of the tour. At one model village, we got the opportunity to dance the Hop dance with the Maasai. We observed that they keep their cattle in the middle of the village with a barricade made of Acacia sticks, to protect them from the wild animals, but their houses do not have any barricade from the wild. The Maasai masks are very interesting, with carved of big animals like elephant, giraffe, zebra, buffalo, lion, leopard etc. On the whole, it is a very interesting culture.

Reaching the Meserani Snake Park, we saw Black and Green Mambas, Red Spitting Cobra, Spotted Eagle Owl, Barn Owl, White-backed Vulture etc in the enclosures. Crocodiles, Speckled Mousebirds, Collared Dove and Guineafowl were seen in the open. We had the experience of wearing a live snake as a necklace. Finally, we moved to the Arusha Backpackers Hotel to end the day.

We were all very excited in anticipation of see the Big Five of Tanzania: Lion, Leopard, Rhino, Elephant and Cape Buffalo. The term 'Big Five' was coined by big-game hunters not due to the size of the animals, but because they are the five most difficult animals to hunt on foot in Africa. During our trip, we were lucky enough to see all except the Leopard; however, we saw the Cheetah with its antelope prey.

The next day, October 11, while having breakfast at the rooftop of the hotel, we spotted the Speckled Pigeon on the opposite roof. Then we headed to Tarangire National Park; *en route* we saw several birds with spectacular colours. Reaching around noon, we sat under the Baobab tree for lunch. The Baobab tree looks dry from outside, but actually, just beneath the bark of the tree is a vital resource of survival in Africa. We were very much excited to see the wild in front of our eyes.

We noticed a flag in the middle of the forest, which our guide Mike told us was meant to capture the tsetse fly. We had expected encounters with mosquitos and bugs, and were prepared with mosquito repellent, but had never imagined that flies could bite! We too got bitten by the tsetse fly, and the itching effect of the bite continued even after 10 days.

Mike pointed out a Cheetah with its cub, resting after having hunted an antelope. Moving towards Tarangire River viewpoint, we saw two lionesses resting under the shade of a tree. On the bank of the river, we saw several Wildebeest, as well as a few Blacksmith Lapwings, and a family of baboons.

In the park, we saw elephants, a water buck and black-backed jackals. We also saw many birds: Grey-headed (Chestnut-bellied) Kingfisher, Von der Decken's Hornbill, Hadada Ibis, Go-away-bird, Widow Bird, White-headed Buffalo Weaver, Tanzanian Red-billed Hornbill, Laughing Dove, Crowned Plover, Southern Ground Hornbill, White-bellied Bustard, Fischer's Lovebird, Little Bee-eater etc.

That night, we stayed at the Hotel Panorama Igloo, where we had to use torches for moving around. During dinner we enjoyed some African music with dancers and acrobats. They made music using the Hakuna Matata, which was made of bamboo and sounded like a piano, some big drums, and even simple tin sheets.

The next day, at the Lake Manyara National Park, we saw the wild mango tree with white flowers, which are favoured by the Blue Monkey. One elephant was eating the dry bush. We saw several Baboons, Hogs, Wildebeest etc.

We saw some red-barked and yellow-barked acacia trees. The Germans earlier called the yellow-barked acacia trees as Yellow Fever trees, because they thought that these trees were the cause of yellow fever. Later on, it was proven otherwise, but the name remained.

We came across a wild elephant very near our vehicle, a Baboon with a baby on its back, and a Black-faced Monkey.

We reached the Manyara Lake, which was a bird paradise. Water birds like African Spoonbills, uncountable Lesser Flamingos, Hadada Ibis, Egyptian Goose, Grey Heron, Blacksmith Lapwings, African Jacana, Great White Pelican, Hottentot Teal, Water Thick-knee, etc were seen. I was delighted to see the flights of the Lesser Flamingos.

On a tree, we saw a pair of Silvery-cheeked Hornbills, Red-and-yellow Barbet, Mousebird, Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, African Fish Eagle. Saddled-billed Stork was spectacular, confirming once again that Nature is the best painter. I was astonished to see one nest, so cleanly woven, hanging from the grass.

At the Manyara Hippo pool, we saw Cape Buffalos in front of our vehicle, and also saw a carcass of a Cape Buffalo in the open field, with several Vultures. A river was flowing through the dense forest. After lunch, we reached the viewpoint beside the hot spring, where we saw several kinds of Plovers, Wire-tailed Swallows, Larks etc. The swamp had a rich yellow deposit of sulphur.

We then returned to the Panorama Igloo Hotel to rest for the night; we had dinner with African live music.

The next day, October 13, we enjoyed the sunrise from the view point of the hotel, where we also had our breakfast. Here we saw several weavers along with their nests in the yellow-barked acacia. I was astonished to see the Pied Crow flying very high. Then it was time to bid good-bye to Panorama Igloo. We were now ready to move to the most exciting part of the tour: Serengeti camping.

Before entering the Serengeti National Park, we needed to ensure that our vehicles were reliable; hence all our vehicles were thoroughly checked in the garage and repaired. Soon, we were in front of the gate of Ngorongoro Conservation Area. We were very excited. Mosses hanging from the trees; white, violet and yellow wild flowers all around; rich greenery provided by Nature soothed our eyes. We were welcomed by the Giraffes, and we also saw mating ostriches. We reached the Ngorogoro view point: Vast crater, the natural wonder was in front of us.

Reaching Serengeti, I felt that I was standing on a big disk, and understood that the name Serengeti ('endless plains') was perfectly matched with the landscape.

We saw some wild zebras grazing. The road was full of dust. Mike showed us several vertical columns of dust far away and told us that they were “devil’s wind like a small tornado”. Luckily we saw one of them in front of us, moving from right to left.

We saw an Eastern (pale) Chanting Goshawk sitting on a stone. Several Tawny Eagles with their nests were seen on the acacia trees. Helmeted Guineafowl were wandering around. An Elephants’ family, with a baby elephant, was spectacular. One Giraffe was standing alone, and a Cheetah was peeping out from the grass. We also saw a Long-tailed Fiscal.

At the Serengeti National Park, a Marabou Stork and several Superb Starlings welcomed us. We saw Fischer’s Lovebirds and Buffalo Weavers. Someone pointed out a “small Cheetah”, which Mike corrected to the Serval Cat. Very difficult to spot, the Serval Cat is a wild cat found in Africa.

**Serval Cat**

The sun was about to set, and Nature was playing with colours; it was beautiful. We saw many Thomson’s gazelles and some Spotted Hyenas.

The washroom being a little far from the camp, we were instructed not to move out alone in the night.

The crystal clear sky was amazing: it seemed that all the stars were twinkling just for our immense pleasure. We could even see the Milky Way in the sky.

The next morning, we left for the Ngorongoro Crater. We saw a pride of lions, 14 to be exact. We saw several lionesses, many zebras, uncountable wildebeest, lots of Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles etc. Mike told us that the Grant's gazelles always go away from the sun. They have some glands near their mouth due to which they don't sweat, hence they do not feel thirsty. They can live without water for up to seven days. Thomson's gazelles are smaller than Grant's gazelles, and have black stripes near the belly, unlike the Grant's gazelles.

Hippos resting in the hippo pool looked like stones in the water.

Then we started for the Ngorongoro Crater. The common man believes that the Ngorongoro once rivalled Kilimanjaro in size. A solid lid was formed from lava which subsequently collapsed when molten rock subsided. Huge ash produced by volcano provides fertile soil for the crops outside Ngorongoro Conservation Area, and the vast grassland of savanna which supports large herds.

We were going down about 650m to reach the Ngorongoro Crater. Here we saw uncountable Blue Wildebeest, several Crowned Storks, Hogs etc.

Near a small river we saw the Kori Bustard, the largest flying bird native to Africa. It seemed like one bird was eating another, but Mike drove the vehicle nearby and showed us that there was only one bird. The feathers around the neck were puffed up, giving the appearance of a thicker neck than normal. We misunderstood the neck to be a separate bird.

**Kori Bustard**

At the water point (a huge swamp area) at Ngorongoro, we saw Pelicans happily swimming around in the swamp. Mike told us that he had seen at least six elephants die in the swamp, which was also called Elephants' Grave. Mike explained that the chewing teeth of the elephant are replaced six times in a typical elephant's lifetime. Teeth are not replaced by new ones emerging vertically from the jaws, as in most mammals; instead, new teeth grow at the back of the mouth and move forward, pushing out the old ones. The sixth, and usually final, set must last the elephant the rest of its life. Hence, older males tend to come to the swamp to get food which they can chew easily. Sometimes, Mike explained, they would get stuck in the swamp due to thick mud, and hence perish there.

**Crocodile**

We asked Mike to show us a crocodile, which we found on a small island besides the Hippo Pool. Then we asked Mike to show us the endangered Black Rhinoceros, which Mike actually managed to locate, grazing in a field far away from our vehicle. The huge Black Rhinos must have been at least twice the size of a full grown Wildebeest.

**Black Rhino**

We then returned to the Arusha Backpackers Hotel to rest for the night.

The next day, after breakfast, we went to Shanga where we saw a lot of broken glass beside the pavement. The Shanga guide told us that those pieces of glass were used for making trinkets as well as some useful items by differently abled individuals.

We saw some handloom and handmade jewellery with colourful glass beads. One deaf and dumb person created a wine glass in front of our eyes in no time. Alex, who could not walk, made wonderful hand paintings.

Another wonder was waiting for us. Tanzanite stone, which is a blue or purple variety of zoisite, was discovered in 1967 in the Mererani hills near Arusha and Mount Kilimanjaro.

Tanzanite is a thousand times rarer than diamonds. We saw some Tanzanite stones in one of the shops; a small Tanzanite stone of 72mg cost me $72!!

We saw many hand-woven baskets, spears, pots, etc. At the vast art gallery, I was spellbound when I saw several hand paintings along with Maasai masks and dolls.

At Serengeti Street, the local handicraft market, I purchased some small mementos, like a small soft stone bowl, some hand-made ear rings, and a small salt container with a spoon made of animal bones.

Then it was time to leave. We boarded our bus and reached Kilimanjaro Airport. It was time to say goodbye to Tanzania!

I would like to thank each and every one of our group members who made this trip so enjoyable. Special thanks to Shaafat Sir for organizing this great trip, which will remain memorable throughout my life.

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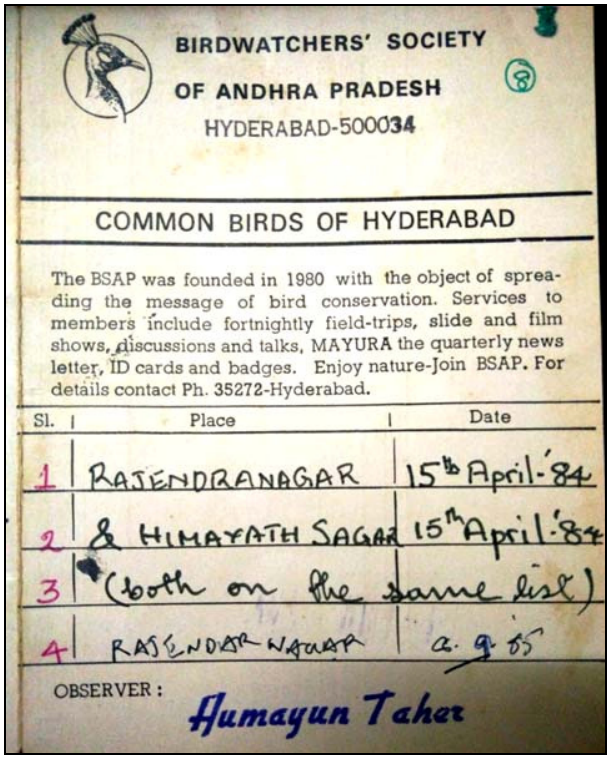
Editor's Note: The above is a concise report on the BSAP trip to Tanzania. This will be followed up with a Special Issue of the Pitta shortly.

## THE PEN & THE BINOCULAR – Part-4

Text & Photos: Humayun Taher

The National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) campus at Rajendranagar was a popular destination in the old days of the BSAP. There was also a Sheep Farm nearby and the backwaters of the Himayat Sagar extended close to this place. Accordingly, whenever we visited the NIRD Campus, Himayat Sagar was also part of the field trip.

This was a trip with one major difference. The BSAP had introduced the famous "Tick-list" cards earlier that year and most of us were now flaunting this excellent invention. There were some key advantages in using these cards – now, when we were compiling the bird-list at the end of the trip, it was not essential to remember what had been said earlier. It was easy to see which bird had been missed out and it could be added on. However, the old habits of pen-and-paper die hard and most of us still maintained a notebook, along with the tick-list cards. Below is the trip tick-list card:



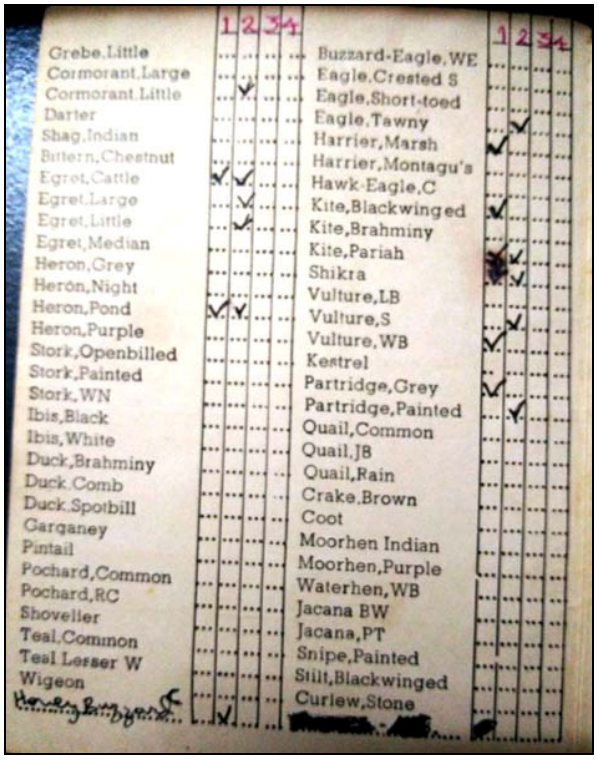
BIRDWATCHERS' SOCIETY
OF ANDHRA PRADESH
HYDERABAD-500034

COMMON BIRDS OF HYDERABAD

The BSAP was founded in 1980 with the object of spreading the message of bird conservation. Services to members include fortnightly field-trips, slide and film shows, discussions and talks, MAYURA the quarterly news letter, ID cards and badges. Enjoy nature-Join BSAP. For details contact Ph. 35272-Hyderabad.

| Sl. | Place | Date |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | RAJENDRANAGAR | 15th April-'84 |
| 2 | & HIMAYATH SAGAR | 15th April-'84 |
| 3 | (both on the same list) | |
| 4 | RAJENDAR NAGAR | a. 9. 85 |

OBSERVER : Humayun Taher



| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grebe,Little | | | | | Buzzard-Eagle,WE | | | | |
| Cormorant,Large | | | | | Eagle,Crested S | | | | |
| Cormorant,Little | | ✓ | | | Eagle,Short-toed | | | | |
| Darter | | | | | Eagle,Tawny | | | | ✓ |
| Shag,Indian | | | | | Harrier,Marsh | ✓ | | | |
| Bittern,Chestnut | | | | | Harrier,Montagu's | | | | |
| Egret,Cattle | ✓ | ✓ | | | Hawk-Eagle,C | | | | |
| Egret,Large | | ✓ | | | Kite,Blackwinged | | | | ✓ |
| Egret,Little | | ✓ | | | Kite,Brahminy | | | | |
| Egret,Median | | | | | Kite,Pariah | | | | ✓ |
| Heron,Grey | | | | | Shikra | | | | ✓ |
| Heron,Night | | | | | Vulture,LB | | | | |
| Heron,Pond | ✓ | ✓ | | | Vulture,S | | | | ✓ |
| Heron,Purple | | | | | Vulture,WB | ✓ | | | |
| Stork,Openbilled | | | | | Kestrel | | | | |
| Stork,Painted | | | | | Partridge,Grey | | | | ✓ |
| Stork,WN | | | | | Partridge,Painted | | | | ✓ |
| Ibis,Black | | | | | Quail,Common | | | | |
| Ibis,White | | | | | Quail,JB | | | | |
| Duck,Brahminy | | | | | Quail,Rain | | | | |
| Duck,Comb | | | | | Crake,Brown | | | | |
| Duck,Spotbill | | | | | Coot | | | | |
| Garganey | | | | | Moorhen Indian | | | | |
| Pintail | | | | | Moorhen,Purple | | | | |
| Pochard,Common | | | | | Waterhen,WB | | | | |
| Pochard,RC | | | | | Jacana BW | | | | |
| Shoveller | | | | | Jacana,PT | | | | |
| Teal,Common | | | | | Snipe,Painted | | | | |
| Teal Lesser W | | | | | Stilt,Blackwinged | | | | |
| Wigeon | | | | | Curlew,Stone | | | | |

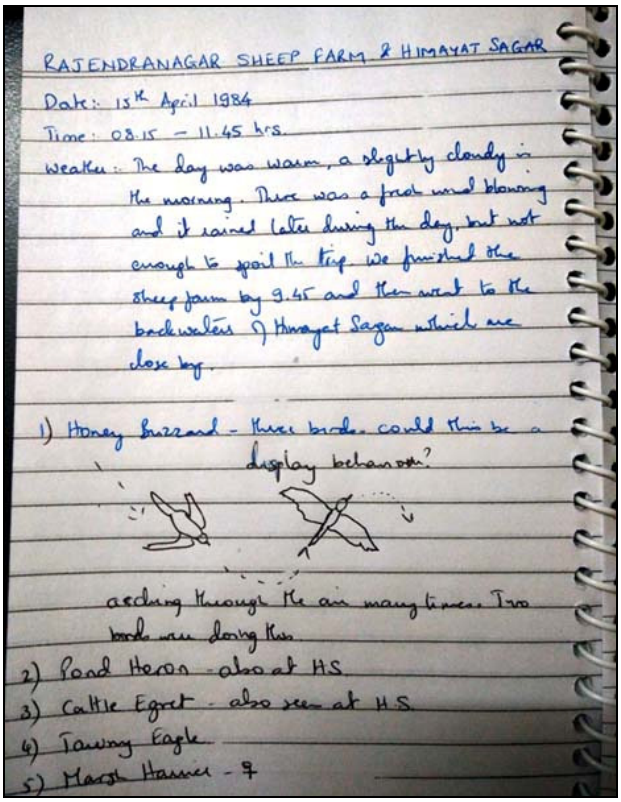
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pratincole SI | | | | |
| Lapwing,RW | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Lapwing,YW | | | | |
| Plover,Little R | | | | |
| Greenshank | | | | |
| Redshank | | | | |
| Sandpiper,C | | | | |
| Sandpiper,Green | | | | |
| Sandpiper,Wood | ✓ | | | |
| Snipe,Fantail | | | | |
| Stint,Little | | | | |
| Gull Blackheaded | | | | |
| Gull,Brownheaded | | | | |
| Tern,Indian River | | | | |
| Tern,Whiskered | | | | |
| Dove,Little Brown | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Dove,Red Turtle | | | | |
| Dove,Ring | | | | |
| Dove Spotted | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Pigeon,Blue Rock | | | | |
| Pigeon,Green | | | | |
| Parakeet,BH | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Parakeet,RR | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Crow-Pheasant | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Cuckoo Common H | | | | |
| Cuckoo,Indian | | | | |
| Cuckoo,Pied C | | | | |
| Cuckoo, Plaintive | | | | |
| Koel | | | | |
| Malkoha,Small GB | | | | |
| ..... | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Owlet Spotted | ✓ | | | |
| Nightjar,C Indian | | | | |
| Swift,House | | ✓ | | |
| Swift,Palm | | | | |
| Kingfisher,C Blue | | | | |
| Kingfisher,Pied | ✓ | | | |
| Kingfisher, WB | | ✓ | | |
| Bee-Eater,BT | ✓ | | | |
| Bee Eater,SG | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Roller,Indian | | ✓ | | |
| Hoopoe | ✓ | | | |
| Hornbill,Grey | | | | |
| Barbet,CB | ✓ | | | |
| Woodpecker,GB | | | | |
| Lark,AC Finch | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Lark,Crested | | ✓ | | |
| Lark,RWB | | | | |
| Lark,RT Finch | | ✓ | | |
| Lark,Short-toed | | | | |
| Lark,Singing Bush | | | | |
| Skylark,S Indian | | | | |
| Martin,Crag | | | | |
| Martin,Dusky C | ✓ | | | |
| Swallow,Cliff | | | | |
| Swallow,Common | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Swallow,RR | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Swallow,WT | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Shrike,Baybacked | | | | |
| Shrike,Brown | ✓ | | | |
| Shrike,Grey | ✓ | | | |
| ..... | | | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shrike,RB | | | | |
| Oriole,Golden | ✓ | | | |
| Drongo,Black | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Drongo WB | | | | |
| Swallow Shrike,A | | ✓ | | |
| Myna,Brahminy | ✓ | | | |
| Myna,Common | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Rosy Pastor | | | | |
| Crow,House | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Crow,Jungle | | ✓ | | |
| Pie Indian Tree | | ✓ | | |
| Cuckoo Shrike,BH | | | | |
| Cuckoo Shrike,L | | | | |
| Minivet,Little | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Wood-Shrike,C | | | | |
| Iora,Common | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Bulbul,Redvented | ✓ | | | |
| Bulbul,WB | | | | |
| Babbler,Common | | ✓ | | |
| Babbler,Jungle | | | | |
| Babbler,L Grey | | ✓ | | |
| Babbler RB | | | | |
| Babbler,WH | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Babbler,YE | ✓ | | | |
| Flycatcher,P | | | | |
| Flycatcher,RB | | | | |
| Flycatcher,TB | | ✓ | | |
| Tailor Bird | | ✓ | | |
| Warbler,Ashy W | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Warbler,Blyth's R | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Warbler,Reed | | ✓ | | |

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Warbler,FW | ✓ | | | |
| Warbler,Indian W | | ✓ | | |
| Warbler,S F | ✓ | | | |
| Whitethroat,L | | | | |
| Chat,Pied Bush | ✓ | | | |
| Chat,Stone | | | | |
| Redstart,Black | | | | |
| Robin Indian | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Robin,Magpie- | | | | |
| Thrush,Blue Rock | | | | |
| Pipit,Indian | | | | |
| Pipit, Tree | | | | |
| Wagtail,BH Y | | | | |
| Wagtail,Grey | | | | |
| Wagtail,Large P | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Wagtail,White | | | | |
| Wagtail,Yellow | | | | |
| Flowerpecker,TB | | | | |
| Flowerpecker,T a | | | | |
| Sunbird,Purple | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Sunbird,PR | | ✓ | | |
| Baya | | ✓ | | |
| Munia,BH | | | | |
| Munia,Red | | | | |
| Munia,Spotted | | | | |
| Munia,WT | | | | |
| Sparrow,House | ✓ | | | |
| Weaver Bird,S | | | | |
| Honey Buzzard | ✓ | | | |

As I said, there were still a few of us who refused to let go of the old notebook and pen; I happened to be one of these, and here are some of the notes I made to go along with the tick-list card:



RAJENDRANAGAR SHEEP FARM & HIMAYAT SAGAR

Date: 15th April 1984

Time: 08.15 – 11.45 hrs.

Weather: The day was warm, a slightly cloudy in the morning. There was a fresh wind blowing and it rained later during the day, but not enough to spoil the trip. We finished the sheep farm by 9.45 and then went to the backwaters of Himayat Sagar which are close by.

1) Honey Buzzard - three birds. could this be a display behaviour?



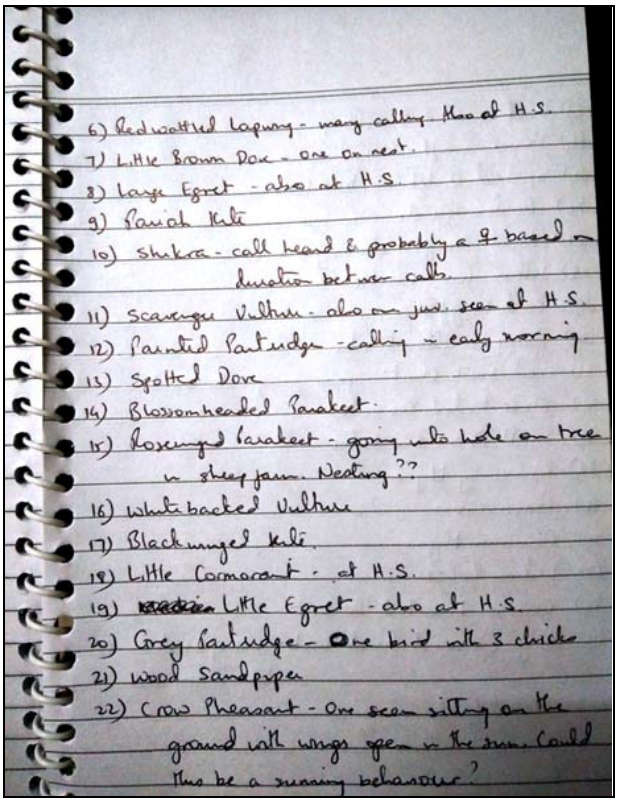
circling through the air many times. Two birds are doing this.

2) Pond Heron - also at H.S.

3) Cattle Egret - also seen at H.S.

4) Tawny Eagle

5) Marsh Harrier - ♀



6) Red wattled Lapwing - many calling. Also at H.S.

7) Little Brown Dove - one on nest.

8) Large Egret - also at H.S.

9) Pariah Kite

10) Shikra - call heard & probably a ♀ based on duration between calls.

11) Scavenger Vulture - also one juv. seen at H.S.

12) Painted Partridge - calling - early morning

13) Spotted Dove

14) Blossomheaded Parakeet.

15) Roseringed Parakeet - going into hole on tree in sheep farm. Nesting??

16) White backed Vulture

17) Blackwinged Kite

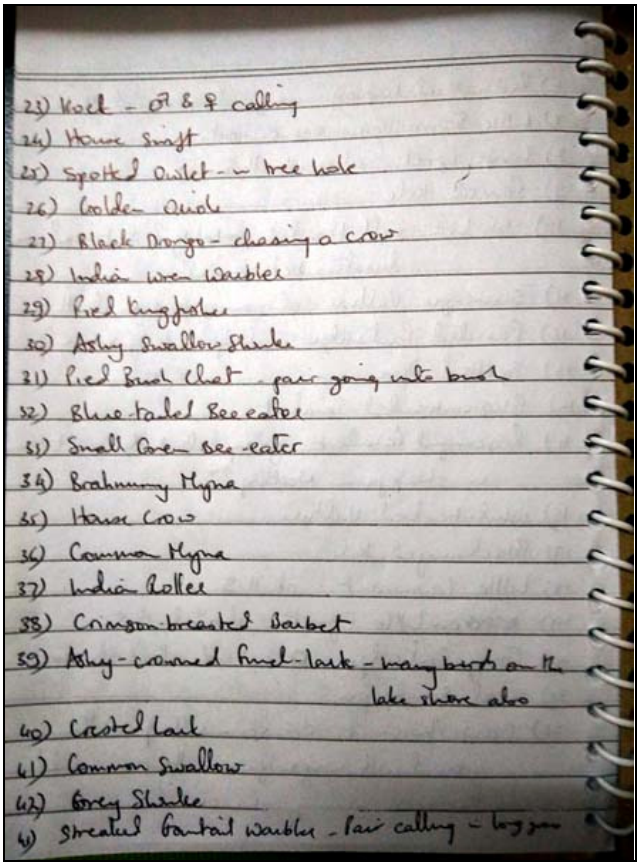
18) Little Cormorant - at H.S.

19) ~~Pond~~ Little Egret - also at H.S.

20) Grey Partridge - One bird with 3 chicks

21) Wood Sandpiper

22) Crow Pheasant - One seen sitting on the ground with wings open in the sun. Could this be a sunning behaviour?


23) Koel - ♂ & ♀ calling
24) House Swift
25) Spotted Owlet - in tree hole
26) Golden Oriole
27) Black Drongo - chasing a crow
28) India wren Warbler
29) Pied kingfisher
30) Ashy Swallow Shrike
31) Pied Bush Chat - pair going into bush
32) Blue-tailed Bee eater
33) Small Green Bee-eater
34) Brahminy Myna
35) House Crow
36) Common Myna
37) India Roller
38) Crimson-breasted Barbet
39) Ashy-crowned finch-lark - many birds on the lake shore also
40) Crested Lark
41) Common Swallow
42) Grey Shrike
43) Streaked Fantail Warbler - pair calling - long

The highlight of this trip (April **1984!**) was the display of the Crested (now Oriental) Honey-buzzard. We did not, at that time, know for sure that this was the breeding display, so we recorded it in our notebooks simply as probable display behaviour, with a couple of rough diagrams to show what was going on. Another significant point about this observation is the fact that the Crested Honey-buzzard was known then to nest in the area, which was only a few kilometres away from the city and in an area that is now right inside the Shamshabad limits!

Our hosts on this trip were the authorities of the NIRD, and they provided us with a sumptuous breakfast, augmented considerably by our own well-filled tuck-boxes. It was while we were enjoying the feast that the aerial displays of the Honey-buzzards started, and suddenly brought forth rapturous expressions on our their upward turned faces. I think anyone, seeing the group, would have been pardoned in mistaking us for a group of devout Israelites partaking of the manna dropping from heaven.

If any of my readers wishes to take up this pen-pencil-paper-notebook methodology, I would be extremely happy to share my thoughts. If nothing else, it will help me to relive my own early days. Keep recording!

***Note***: Several names may be unfamiliar to the younger set of birders. I suggest that readers use the following publications to identify the species:

1. Compact Handbook of the Birds of India and Pakistan by Salim Ali and S. Dillon Ripley
2. A Synopsis of the Birds of the Indian Subcontinent by S. Dillon Ripley

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***We wish all our members a very Happy New Year 2018***

## Bird of the Month

Umesh Mani

# Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*)

**Ferruginous Duck** (Kaddam, January 24, 2016)
**(Photo: Srikanth Bhamidipati)**

Order: Anseriformes
Family: Anatidae
Genus: *Aythya*
Species: *A. nyroca*
Size: 38-42cm

Description & distribution: The Ferruginous Duck, also known as Ferruginous Pochard, Common White-eye or White-eyed Pochard, is a medium-sized diving duck from Eurasia. The breeding male is unmistakable, showing a rich chestnut head, neck and breast, with contrasting pure white undertail coverts, and a white iris. The females are duller and browner than the males, but have a dark iris. The white belly, almost completely white underwings and a conspicuous white wing-bar are visible in flight. The eclipse male is similar to the female, but has brighter chestnut on head and breast, and has a white iris.

It breeds from Iberia (south-west corner of Europe) and the Maghreb (northern parts of Africa) south to Arabia and east to western Mongolia, Kashmir and Ladakh. It winters in the Mediterranean Basin, the Black Sea and parts of sub-Saharan Africa; eastern birds winter in south and south-east Asia, including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Maldives.

Habitat & behaviour: The Ferruginous Duck, although less gregarious than other *Aythya* species, is usually found in large mixed flocks along with other diving ducks like Tufted Ducks and Common Pochards, in coastal lagoons, and in shallow freshwater (and occasionally saline or brackish) pools and irrigation tanks that are rich in submerged or floating aquatic vegetation, with dense stands of emergent vegetation on the fringes. In coastal areas, it prefers to stay out of reach of the surf.

It is usually shy; it spends the day resting in the middle of water bodies, away from human interference, and approaches shore or moves to inundated inland paddy fields to feed mainly after dusk or at night. Its diet consists mainly of aquatic plants and some molluscs, aquatic insects and small fish. Feeding is usually by diving though it may occasionally upend for food. Its flight is swift. The call is a harsh *koor-ker-ker*.

Nesting: The Ferruginous Duck generally breeds between May to June; the nest is a pad of reeds or rushes lined with finer grasses and a thick layer of down feathers, built among reeds close to water. The usual clutch consists of 6-10 pale buff eggs.

Local name: The Ferruginous Duck is known as *'Kurchiya'* or *'Burar mada'* in Hindi, *'Tamni'* in Gujarati, *'Lal bigri'* or *'Bhutihans'* in Bengali and *'Kali muri'* in Assamese.

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**For Private Circulation Only**
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